

In the Claims:

1. Please cancel claim 1.
2. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein said hand interconnecting portion has a main hand engagement surface portion which in the operating position comes into engagement with at least a portion of a surface of the main hand portion.
3. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 2, wherein said main hand engagement surface portion is located to engage at least a portion of the front palm surface of the hand.
4. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 2, wherein said main hand engagement surface portion is located to engage at least a portion of the back surface of the hand.
5. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 2, wherein there is at said side to side apparatus axis of rotation a pivot member connecting said hand interconnecting portion with said forearm interconnecting portion.
6. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 2, wherein said hand interconnecting portion and said forearm interconnecting portion have contact surfaces arranged to limit relative movement between said hand interconnecting portion and said forearm interconnecting portion to rotational movement about said side to side apparatus axis of rotation.

7. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein said hand interconnecting portion and said forearm interconnecting portion have contact surfaces arranged to limit relative movement between said hand interconnecting portion and said forearm interconnecting portion to rotational movement about said side to side apparatus axis of rotation.
8. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 2, wherein said forearm engaging portion has a forearm contact surface that forms with said main hand engagement surface portion a substantially longitudinally aligned contact surface.
9. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein said forward hand engaging portion comprises a handle engaging portion having a hand gripping surface which in the operating position is positioned to be engaged at least in part by a front surface portion of the finger portion of the hand.
10. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 9, wherein said hand gripping surface is contoured to substantially match the front surface portion of the finger portion so as to be shaped in a contour of the hand in a rod gripping position.
11. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 9, wherein said rod engaging portion has a hand gripping surface which in the operating position is positioned to be

- engaged at least in part by a front surface portion of the finger portion of the hand.
12. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 11, wherein said hand gripping surface is contoured to substantially match the front surface portion of the finger portion so as to be shaped of the hand in a rod gripping position.
 13. Please cancel claim 13.
 14. Please cancel claim 14.
 15. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein said hand engagement section is formed with an open thumb accommodating region to receive a thumb of the hand in a manner that the thumb and can be positioned to enable the thumb to retain the rod in the receiving recess and can be moved laterally free of the hand engaging section.
 16. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein at least a portion of rod engaging portion that is engaged by said an outer finger portion of said finger portion of the hand has at least a moderate degree of flexibility so that a fisherman is able to apply a gripping force with the hand to squeeze said at least a portion of said rod engaging portion inwardly toward the fishing rod.
 17. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein said rod receiving recess is defined by a rod receiving surface made of a high friction material to resist a

twisting rotational movement of the rod in the rod receiving recess.

18. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 21 [2], wherein said hand engagement section comprises a main hand engaging portion and a finger engaging portion, with said main hand engaging portion and said finger engaging portion engaging, respectively, a back surface of the main hand portion and a back surface of the hand finger portion, said finger engaging portion being contoured to engage the finger portion of the hand when in a gripping position.
19. (Currently amended) The combination [apparatus] as recited in Claim 18, wherein said hand engagement section further comprises a glove portion positioned to be able to engage at least a finger portion of the person's hand with the hand being positioned adjacent to the hand engagement section.
20. A method to assist a fisherman in gripping a fishing rod, with said fisherman having a lower arm portion, which comprises a forearm having a rear elbow location and a rod gripping hand connected thereto at a wrist location, and with the hand having at the wrist location a side to side hand axis of rotation and a back and forth hand axis of rotation, and with the hand comprising a main hand portion with a back surface and a front palm surface, and comprising a finger portion that has a base connecting finger location and an outer finger portion, said apparatus having a rear to front longitudinal axis and being arranged to be mounted in an operating position to said forearm, said method comprising:

- a) providing a forearm mounting section which comprises a forearm engaging portion arranged to be connected in firm engagement to the forearm in an operating position and a forearm interconnecting portion which, with the forearm engaging portion in the operating position, is located proximate to the wrist location;
- b) providing a hand engagement section which comprises a hand interconnecting portion and a forward hand engaging portion, and which is arranged to be engaged by the hand;
- c) connecting said hand interconnecting portion and said forearm interconnecting portion in a manner that in the operating position the hand engagement section is able to rotate about a side to side apparatus axis of rotation which is coincident with, or proximate to, and substantially parallel to, the side to side hand axis of rotation, and the hand engagement section is restrained from rotational movement about a second axis having a substantial alignment component perpendicular to said side to side apparatus axis of rotation, in a manner that in the operating position; and
- d) positioning the hand in engagement with the hand engagement section and causing the rod to be gripped so that the hand and the hand engagement section are limited in movement about said back and forth hand axis of rotation.

Please add claim as follows:

21. (New) A combination fishing rod and gripping apparatus to assist a fisherman in gripping a handle of the fishing rod, with said fisherman having a forearm which has a longitudinal forearm axis of orientation, a rear elbow location and a rod gripping hand connected thereto at a wrist location, and with the hand having at the wrist location a side to side hand axis of rotation and a back and forth hand axis of rotation, and with the hand comprising a main hand portion with a front palm surface and a back surface and comprising a finger portion that has a base connecting finger location and an outer finger portion, said combination comprising:
- a) a fishing rod comprising a rear handle section and a forward rod section, and having a longitudinal rod axis;
 - b) a gripping apparatus having a rear to front apparatus alignment axis with said apparatus alignment axis generally aligned with the longitudinal axis of orientation when mounted in an operating position to said forearm;
 - c) said apparatus comprising a forearm mounting section which comprises a forearm engaging portion arranged to be connected in engagement to the forearm in said operating position and a forearm interconnecting portion which, with the forearm engaging portion in the operating position, is located proximate to the wrist location;
 - d) said apparatus further comprising a hand engagement section which comprises a hand interconnecting portion and a forward hand engaging portion, and which is arranged to be engaged by the hand in an operation position;

- e) said hand interconnecting portion and said forearm interconnecting portion being arranged to be connected to one another in a manner that in the operating position the hand engagement section is able to rotate about a side to side apparatus axis of rotation which is coincident with, or proximate to, and substantially parallel to, the side to side hand axis of rotation, and the hand engagement section is restrained from rotational movement about a second axis having a substantial alignment component perpendicular to said side to side apparatus axis of rotation, in a manner that in the operating position with the hand of the person in engagement with the hand engagement section, the hand and the hand engagement section are limited in movement about said back and forth hand axis of rotation;
- f) said forward hand engaging portion of said hand engagement section comprising a hand engaging member having a concavely shaped inner surface having at least front and rear surface portions defining a laterally aligned, laterally facing recess that has oppositely positioned end openings and a laterally facing recess opening so that the rod can be moved laterally through the recess opening into the recess with the rod extending through end openings, and the rod can be moved laterally from the recess;
- g) said hand engagement section being arranged so that with the hand being engaged with the hand engaging section in the operating position, the fingers of the hand are in

engagement with the forward hand engaging portion, and the thumb of the hand is able to be positioned in a retaining position across the recess opening, and then with the thumb being moved to a release position away from the recess opening the rod can be moved through the release opening and out of the recess; and

- h) said combination being arranged so that with the forearm mounting section being connected in engagement with the forearm, with the hand in engagement with the hand engagement section in its operating position, and with the rod being in the operating position in the hand engagement section, the person's hand is able to exert a force on the rod while rotating the hand engagement section about the side to side axis, while reacting forces that would cause rotation about the back and forth axis into the gripping apparatus so as to reduce the effect of these forces on the person's hand and forearm.